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Urgency in Soviet Talks

PRESIDENT NIXON'S re-emphasis on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) actually was bred by new warnings from CIA Director Richard M. Helms.

When the Soviet violated the atomic test-ban understanding with the United States she became the only nation to have successfully test-fired a nuclear-armed missile at an incoming missile. Thus the USSR is demonstrably (not merely on paper) far, far ahead of us in missile defense.

THE SOVIET INTERCEPTOR is called GALOSH, and Helms counts this defense system's operative sites at 90 and finds the Soviet working day and night, around the clock, on 30 more. These were detected by our SAMOS "spy bird" photographic satellites.

This is the crunch. Our country and the free world alike rely not on the ability of the United States to win a nuclear war but on our ability to deter it. In short, not through retaliation after our country is mainly destroyed but by the Soviet's recognition of our overwhelming deterrent force. Yet the Soviet's GALOSH means she has largely cancelled out our Minuteman missile — our most credible deterrent protecting the free world.

Moreover, Helms grimly updated to Mr. Nixon the status of the Soviet super-giant SS-9 intercontinental ballistic missiles, now the largest and most powerful in the world.

Helms told the President that the Soviet has utilized the time since the SALT talks began to build an additional 100 SS-9s. He placed the total today at around 400. These 400 could just about destroy our Minuteman defense force if the Soviet chose to strike.

Nor is that all, behind the scenes, that prompted the President's re-emphasis. Our MIRV is a missile containing multiple warheads that allow one missile rocket to attack several targets at the same time. The Soviet is now similarly equipping its SS-9s and — perhaps most shocking of all — the CIA agents in the USSR find the Soviet's version even more advanced than our MIRV.

Additionally, the CIA agents report that the Soviet has an incipient follow-on generation of SS-9s. Until now this had been only a rumor. In fact, to expand the training of technicians for this follow-on generation the Soviet has opened, on something of a crash basis, two new training schools at Stavropol and Saratov and reopened the closed Boris Oglebsk missile training center.

WE HAVE 81 nuclear subs. The Soviet has 65. But while our own construction, conversion, etc., program is lagging, Helms told the President that the Soviet is now capable of launching one nuclear submarine a month. The CIA expects them to add 70 by 1974, compared to our adding 20.

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STATINTL

U.S.-Soviet missile

freeze told

By Thomas B. Ross

Sun-times Bureau

WASHINGTON — The United States and the Soviet Union have reached tentative agreement on a freeze of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), reliable Nixon administration sources disclosed Wednesday.

Barring an abrupt reversal in the Soviet position, the sources indicated rapid results could be expected when the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) resume in Helsinki in July.

President Nixon announced last Thursday that a deadlock-breaking compromise had been worked out with the Russians on how to proceed in the arms negotiations. But his brief and cloudy statement did not reveal the extent of the progress already made.

However, the President hinted at the tentative agreement in remarks to a group of Southern editors and publishers in Birmingham, Ala., Tuesday. According to a transcript released by the White House Wednesday, Mr. Nixon declared:

"The two superpowers may agree that their mutual interest will be served by a limitation on the one hand on our part of defensive weapons and a limitation on the part of the Soviet Union as far as offensive weapons are concerned."

Questioned about the remarks, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler insisted that there had been no change in the President's position as he outlined it last Thursday.

But other officials conceded that Mr. Nixon had inadvertently indicated the dimensions of his tentative agreement, in secret correspondence, with Soviet Prime Minister Alexei N. Kosygin.

The agreement reportedly calls for the two nations to bring their antiballistic missile (ABM) and ICBM systems into rough balance. That would require the United States to gut back on planned deployment of the Safeguard ABM and for the Soviet Union to stop building new ICBMs.

It is understood that sea-based, Polaris-type missiles would be put aside for a separate agreement after the Soviet Union has been allowed to catch up.

Pact deals only with launchers

It is also understood that "forward-based systems" — U.S. fighter bombers in Western

Defense Sec. Laird says months of preparation needed before discussing European troop reductions with the Russians, Page 50.

Europe and the Mediterranean — would be considered in separate negotiations on a mutual reduction of NATO and Soviet bloc forces.

The tentative agreement reportedly deals only with launchers and does not attempt to limit the number of warheads per missile. The United States has begun to equip its missiles with multiple warheads that can strike different targets and the Soviet Union is expected to follow suit.

The United States has 1,000 Minuteman ICBMs and has stopped building them. The Soviet Union has about 1,400 ICBMs but at least a third are obsolete. It will soon have 288 of its most advanced ICBM, the SS-9, which can carry three or more warheads, each of which could theoretically knock out a Minuteman.

U.S. arms negotiators have been pressing for a 300 limit on the SS-9, thereby assuring that the Minuteman force could not be eliminated in a surprise first strike.

U.S. spy satellites have also detected work at 60 new style holes in the Soviet Union, stirring fears in the Pentagon that the Russians are starting to deploy an even more advanced ICBM.

Senate Republican sources say that the Central Intelligence Agency is contesting the Pentagon on the issue. The CIA reportedly believes that at least two-thirds of the new holes are for the SS-11, a smaller missile that does not have the first-strike capability of the SS-9.

May have two systems

Defense Department spokesman Jerry Friedhelm declared Wednesday, however, that the CIA and the Pentagon are working from the same "agreed estimates." He said the latest information is that the Russians may be "involved in two separate systems of silo improvement."

"Our best judgment," he added, "remains that we would expect to see new missiles or improvements of existing missiles."

Soviet negotiators at SALT are understood to have advised the U.S. delegation that they are "modernizing" their silos — that is, hardening with concrete — rather than deploying more and better missiles.

Mr. Nixon's tentative agreement with the Russians is based on that assumption.